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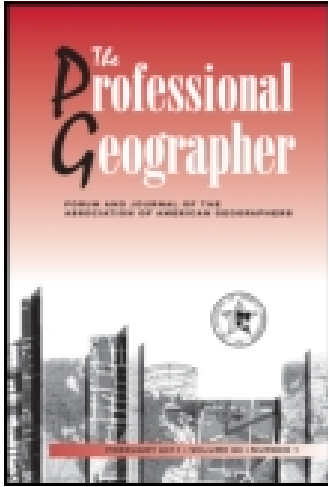


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Reexamining the Montgomery Bus Boycott: Toward an Empathetic Pedagogy of the Civil Rights Movement

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Geographers have assessed the success and failure of the U.S. Civil Rights Movement in terms of the African American struggle for justice, social identity, and economic survival. Conspicuously absent from the geographic literature are pedagogically oriented studies of the historical geography of the Civil Rights era. The Movement's popular image has congealed into a celebratory collection of names and dates, the sum of which is a vague, nearly mythic retelling that students might recognize but not necessarily care about. As a result, the Movement is at once contemptuously familiar yet bewilderingly strange for our students. This article offers a sympathetic critique of conventional Movement narratives, introducing the notion of empathetic pedagogy and presenting a case study of the Montgomery bus boycott. Our pedagogical approach stresses the role of empathy, both as a factor in shaping the actual sociospatial development of the Movement, as well as a strategy for encouraging students to appreciate the everyday courage and sacrifice that animated so many of its participants. Our study brings together two burgeoning literatures that have the potential to cultivate empathy among students: the critical reevaluation of mobility and explorations of subjectivity from a psychoanalytic perspective. Here mobility is understood in both its literal and figurative sense: in the case of the bus boycott, the intricate network established to literally move African Americans around the city, as well as the figurative movement of sympathy and solidarity that "moved" people to support their efforts and now informs popular, selective understandings of the protest. **Key Words:** Civil Rights Movement, empathy, geographic education, mobility, psychoanalysis.

地理学家已经对美国黑人在正义斗争，社会认同，和经济生存方面的民权运动的成功和失败进行了评估。地理文献明显缺乏的是以教学为导向的民权时代的历史地理学的研究。该运动的流行形象已凝结成庆祝名字和日期的集合，其结果是学生可能会承认的，但不一定会关心的，模糊和近乎神话的复述。因此，对我们的学生来讲，该运动是易于熟悉和轻视，但却令人困惑好奇的。本文提供了一种对传统运动的换位思考的叙述批判，引入移情教育学的概念，并提出了蒙哥马利公共汽车抵制运动的案例研究。我们的教学方法强调换位思考的作用，它不仅在塑造运动的实际社会空间发展上，也在鼓励学生体会日常的勇气和牺牲的战略上起作用，并感动了许多参与者。我们的研究把两种新兴的文献汇集在一起，有培养学生之间的换位思考的潜力：对流动性进行关键的重审，以及从精神分析的角度探索主体性。在这里，流动性在其字面上和比喻意义上被理解为：在巴士抵制案的情况下，建立了复杂的网络以在字面上打动各地的非裔美国人，以及形象化的同情和声援运动，“感动”人们来支持他们的努力，和传递一种对抗议的流行的和选择性的理解。**关键词：**民权运动，换位思考，地理教育，流动性，精神。

Los geógrafos han evaluado el éxito y fracaso del Movimiento de los Derechos Civiles en EE.UU., en términos de la campaña afroamericana por justicia, identidad social y supervivencia económica. Los estudios de la geografía histórica de orientación pedagógica sobre la época de los derechos civiles son conspicuos por su ausencia en la literatura geográfica. La imagen más popular del Movimiento se ha congelado en una colección celebratoria de nombres y fechas, la suma de lo cual es una vaga y casi mítica repetición que los estudiantes podrían acreditar pero que no necesariamente les importe. Como resultado, el Movimiento es a la vez despectivamente familiar y sorprendentemente extraño para nuestros estudiantes. Este artículo presenta una crítica cordial de las narrativas convencionales del Movimiento, introduciendo la noción de pedagogía empática y presentando el estudio de caso del boicot de los buses de Montgomery. Nuestro enfoque pedagógico enfatiza el papel de la empatía, tanto a título de factor que configura el desarrollo socioespacial real del Movimiento, lo mismo que como estrategia para estimular los estudiantes a apreciar el coraje permanente y sacrificio que animaron a tantos de sus participantes. Nuestro estudio junta dos literaturas en ebullición que tienen el potencial de cultivar la empatía entre los estudiantes: la reevaluación crítica de la movilidad y la exploración de la subjetividad desde una perspectiva psicoanalítica. Aquí el término movilidad se entiende tanto en su sentido literal como en el figurativo: en el caso del boicot de los buses, la intrincada red establecida para mover a los afroamericanos literalmente por toda la ciudad, lo mismo que el movimiento figurado de simpatía y solidaridad que “movió” la gente a apoyar sus esfuerzos y que ahora informa la manera popular y selectiva como se entiende la protesta. **Palabras clave: Movimiento de los Derechos Civiles, empatía, educación geográfica, movilidad, psicoanálisis.**

After a quarter-century of commemoration via a wide array of media—history books, state and federal holidays, novels, memorials, and music—the Civil Rights Movement’s status as an iconic moment in American history has assumed the status of received wisdom. The popular image of the Movement is a tightly narrated account of the black freedom struggle that draws on a litany of familiar places (e.g., Little Rock; Montgomery; Greensboro; Birmingham; Washington, DC; Selma; and Memphis), events (e.g., marches, sit-ins, and bus boycotts, judicial rulings and congressional fiat), and motives (e.g., inclusion, fairness, equality) to tell a heroic tale of sacrifice and transcendence. Above all, the figure of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., looms as the Movement’s central figure: predestined, mythic, and magisterial. The sum of this retelling of the Movement’s chronology and leading actor is an understanding of the mid-twentieth-century uprising against white supremacy in the United States as accomplished (rather than ongoing), civil (rather than political-economic or insurrectionist), and increasingly removed (rather than intimate; Dwyer and Alderman 2008).

Thus, a single generation removed from the actual events, a laudatory version of the Movement has entered the canon of American historical representation and education. It represents an important reversal of the nation’s tradition of ignoring and trivializing African American stories and perspectives. Yet, as is the case with any commemoration, the social process of remembering is accompanied,

simultaneously, by a process of forgetting—an excluding of other historical narratives from public consideration and recognition. Arguably, our use in this article of the term *the Movement*—singular and capitalized—to describe the many expressions of the African American uprising against racial oppression is part and parcel of what Lee (1998) has called a “heroes and holidays” approach that tends to depoliticize and sanitize civil rights leaders and events. Even the legacy of the Movement’s most recognized leader, Dr. King, has been somewhat lost; he is remembered more as a peacemaker than as a radical challenger of the racial and economic order (Dyson 2000). More specific to our role as educators working in lecture auditoriums and seminar rooms is the fact that even when the details of the Movement’s history are not well known—as is the case with many of our university students—its narrative arc (i.e., alternating moods of good overcoming evil, struggle leading to transcendence) is very familiar because it conforms to the country’s epic tradition of narrating the past in consensual rather than critical terms.

In short, the popular conception of the Movement has congealed into a loose collection of names and dates, bland verities and mythic endeavors, constituting, in the words of Inwood (2009a), a “normative” civil rights discourse. Cut away from its radical roots, this discourse emphasizes integration, national unity, and the success of U.S. democracy rather than addressing the continuing legacies of racism and inequality. This is the problem we confront as

educators: the Movement's story is so hermetically sealed within this narrative of progress that our students are simultaneously contemptuous of its familiarity (e.g., "Rosa Parks blah, blah, blah. Heard it all before") yet find the conditions that birthed the Movement puzzlingly remote (e.g., "What's a lunch counter anyway? Who takes the bus? Why not buy a car? Non-violence?! I'd never let anyone treat me like that!"). As one teenage respondent wrote on a survey regarding the Movement's relevance to his life: "Where's Tupac?!" (a reference to the assassinated American rapper; Dwyer and Alderman 2008, 41). To put it plainly, the Movement bores many of our students to distraction, and no amount of pleading about the era's "importance" is capable of shaming them into paying attention.

How can this be? How can twentieth-century America's pivotal domestic event be so boringly familiar yet simultaneously estranged from our students? Other educators have noted these challenges when teaching the Civil Rights Movement and the need to engage students in ways that allow them to understand more fully the history of racial struggle (Grant 2001; Dunn 2005; Bolgatz 2007; Scruggs 2010). Some educators have gone so far as to lead students on field expeditions to sites related to the Movement. Such travel is not available to all of us, however, and the Movement's memorial landscapes, which are often the sites of these class visits, do not necessarily challenge conventional narratives about the Civil Rights era (Dwyer and Alderman 2008). In addition, although these field trips are laudable, they do not necessarily address the critical thinking that needs to happen in the traditional classroom.

Like Wills (2005, 128), we advocate transforming the classroom into a "workspace" for "critically examining and complicating collective memory and privileged traditions of remembering." With this in mind, the purpose of this article is to offer a sympathetic criticism of conventional Movement narratives, introducing the notion of empathetic pedagogy and presenting a case study of the Montgomery bus boycott that highlights the empathetic potential of geographic concepts of mobility and subjectivity. The Montgomery bus boycott is one of the Movement's most frequently taught chapters, but the prevailing narrative fails to move beyond the story of

a few "singular heroes," namely, Rosa Parks and Martin Luther King, Jr. (Bolgatz 2007). Missing from this popular retelling is a deeper explanation of how the boycott was planned and organized in terms of social infrastructure (rather than how it simply happened), who helped it succeed (the unnamed, as well as named), and why it meant so much to so many (both inside and outside of Montgomery). Our pedagogical approach stresses the role of empathy in education, both as a strategy for encouraging critical thinking and emotional investment among students and as a factor in shaping the very historical and spatial development of the Movement. In summary, our goal is to invite readers to embrace a different way of investigating the Movement that can alter the kinds of narratives we share in the geography classroom.

The importance of interrupting the conventional narration of the Movement goes beyond improved learning outcomes. Calling attention to overlooked Movement stories and new perspectives on social change also has the potential to change the way students understand themselves in relation to the larger project of civil rights. How we remember the time and place of the past has social consequences in the present, shaping our political attitudes, racial identity, and levels of activism (Griffin and Bollen 2009). Noted historian Manning Marable (2006) has convincingly argued that reimagining the Civil Rights Movement in nonmythical and nonnostalgic ways not only promotes a more accurate interaction with the past but also provides practical guidance in how to challenge contemporary racism. Despite pundits' pronouncements that racism is irrelevant in the wake of Barack Obama's election as U.S. President—itself an extension of Movement-era agitation, radicalization, and achievement—the struggle for equity and justice is incomplete; for example, there are glaring discrepancies between whites and people of color in terms of housing, jobs, education, and health care. An empathetic pedagogy sensitizes students to past civil rights struggles to prompt a critical engagement with their own life stories of oppression and privilege in the present. We argue, as Marable (2006, 37) did, that "the act of reconstructing history is inextricably linked to the political practices, or praxis, of transforming the present and future."

Rethinking the Movement

Students are not alone in their dissatisfaction with mainstream stories about the Movement. Perceptive observers of its history have argued that a richer understanding of the Movement extends beyond the detailed chronicles and biographical profiles that characterize conventional historiography (Carson 1986; Hall 2005). This scholarship argues for a broader conceptualization of what constituted Movement activism, resists making sweeping pronouncements regarding the era's goals, and emphasizes the agency of everyday individuals and local communities in a liberation struggle. Such a perspective captures "a sense of active involvement, of people empowered, engaged in struggle, living their lives in dignity and shaping their own futures" (Goings and Mohl 1996, 3).

Although a fully formed sociospatial understanding of the Movement has yet to be written, happily for the discipline, geographers have been active in assessing the Movement's success and shortcomings—for example, in the context of Malcolm X's geopolitical vision (Tyner 2004; Tyner and Kruse 2004), Martin Luther King, Jr.'s, notion of the "beloved community" (Inwood 2009b), and the role of territoriality and scale in Black Panther Party politics (Tyner 2006a; Heynen 2009). Likewise, the African American struggle for justice, social identity, and economic survival has attracted growing attention from geographers, both in terms of how the Movement was conceived and executed, as well how it is being remembered and commemorated in the present (e.g., B. Wilson 2000; Tyner 2006a, 2006b; Dwyer and Alderman 2008; Heynen 2009; Inwood 2009a). Although geographers have proven adept in elucidating the spatiality of the Movement, they have tended nevertheless to reaffirm traditional Movement histories by emphasizing how major civil rights leaders and organizations articulated geographically based philosophies and strategies of resistance. For instance, there is a conspicuous absence of scholarship by geographers on the role of women in the Movement, despite the important role they often played.

Also absent from the geographic literature is pedagogically oriented writing about the historical geography of the Civil Rights era (but see Tyner 2003). The relative neglect of this topic is at odds with the well-established body

of work addressing both the need and techniques for considering social justice and economic welfare in the geography curriculum (e.g., Dwyer 1999; Merrett 2000, 2004; Russo 2004; Webster 2004). Thus, this article addresses the gap by lending our voices to the rising chorus of educators and activists outside of the field who seek to unseat what has become the traditional Movement narrative. One of the most ambitious efforts to challenge this conventional narrative is the resource guide, *Putting the Movement Back into Civil Rights Teaching*. As one of the guide's editors, View (2004, 3), stated, the typical story of the Movement is often told from a top-down perspective of national leaders and institutions, thus creating a "disempowering narrative" that dehumanizes the "many ordinary people who performed heroic acts in the name of social justice," and who, equipped with organizational intelligence and determination, carried out the "logistical messiness" and "sharp tactical conflicts" of protest.

Reanimating and humanizing the story of the Movement requires historical empathy, a pedagogy that seeks to clarify motives and subjectivity as a means to provoke active, engaged learning. The development of historical empathy requires that students adopt a perspective that might be different from their own (Foster 1999). Moreover, the concept encourages students to establish an emotional connection with historical actors from different eras and walks of life (Brooks 2009; Endacott 2010). In the words of Barton and Levstik (2004, 207–08), empathy "invites us to care with and about people in the past, to be concerned with what happened to them and how they experienced their lives." As geographers, we would add the importance of attending to spatial, as well as temporal coordinates of difference. Our understanding of American racism abounds with spatial metaphors—know your place, the other side of the tracks, sold down the river, back of the bus—and an appropriately empathetic understanding of the Movement must attend to both time and space (Dwyer and Jones 2000).

How best to develop this kind of critically informed, sociospatial empathy? We recommend adjusting our retelling of the Movement's historical geography to pay more attention to the everyday courage and sacrifice that animated so many of its participants, including those we

rarely hear about in conventional Movement narratives. One way in which to recover an active sense of the Movement's lived reality and the subjectivity of its participants is to study the strategies and tactics of the Movement itself. Toward this end, the remainder of this article reexamines the Montgomery bus boycott of 1955–1956. Our study brings together two burgeoning literatures that have the potential to engage students' attention and cultivate empathy: the critical reevaluation of mobility and psychoanalytic explorations of subjectivity. Here mobility is understood in both its literal and figurative sense: in the case of the bus boycott, the intricate network established to literally move African Americans around the city, as well as the figurative movement of sympathy and solidarity that “moved” people to support their efforts and now informs popular, mythic understandings of the Movement.

On Mobility

Conventional histories typically identify the Montgomery bus boycott as a milestone in the Civil Rights Movement—the first large-scale victory of the Movement and the catalyst for a 1956 Supreme Court decision (*Browder v. Gayle*) that struck down the constitutionality of bus segregation laws. Moreover, the boycott campaign against Jim Crow transportation galvanized the reputations of two figures that dominate discussions of the era—Martin Luther King, Jr., and Rosa Parks. King, who served as the pastor of the Dexter Avenue Baptist Church, was new to Montgomery before being enlisted to unite the city's historically divided black community and lead the boycott as president of the Montgomery Improvement Association. Parks, whose defiance of segregated seating and subsequent arrest incited the bus boycott, became an international symbol of the Movement.

Although not denying the importance of King and Parks, it is important to understand that they were part of a larger community of activism that predated and supported their individual heroic efforts. King is frequently identified as the boycott's singular leader, but the campaign was planned by a local black women's civic group called the Women's Political Council, longtime civil rights activist

and National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) official E. D. Nixon, veterans' groups, and others in the city (Kohl 2004). Parks is often represented in conventional Movement lore as a simple, tired seamstress whose quiet refusal to go to the back of the bus sparked a boycott. In reality, she was a trained activist and a vocal opponent of segregation whose conscious act of civil disobedience was part of a larger plan of resistance among Montgomery African Americans (K. H. Wilson 2005). Indeed, before Parks's famous arrest, several other African American women were arrested for refusing to give up their bus seat to a white passenger (Willie 2008). In line with this article's emphasis on retelling the Movement from an empathetic perspective, the drama and importance of Montgomery is most evident in the collective decisions that 17,000 boycotters made each day to refuse to ride the city bus line. They maintained this refusal, in the face of intense white opposition and retaliation, for 381 days. But their activism was not limited to simply refusing to patronize Montgomery buses. They operated, financed, and participated in an insurgent transportation system that served as an alternative to riding city buses.

For geographers, the boycott and its attendant alternative transportation system are especially instructive of the politics of mobility, a theoretical perspective that suggests that travel is not simply an abstract journey from point A to point B. Mobility is socially constructed motion. In other words, mobility is physical movement invested with meaning and embedded within structures of power (Cresswell 2006a). Similarly, transportation is not a socially neutral enterprise; a racial politics guides its organization, use, and impact (Bullard and Johnson 1997; Henderson 2006). As illustrated in the case of Montgomery, African American mobility and transportation, rather than simply a matter of flows or infrastructure, are important sites of racial identity construction and invariably linked to a broader struggle over rights, citizenship, and freedom (Cresswell 2006b).

People's movements take on social meaning (positive and negative) and mobility can be (re)constructed in ways that either control or empower historically marginalized individuals and groups. The American South is a region with a long history of severely restricting African American movement—beginning with

enslavement and continuing through the Jim Crow era, when vagrancy laws and other sanctions, including violence, were used to limit black mobility (Blackmon 2008; Hague 2010). With the maintenance of white supremacy came the production of African American immobility. African Americans in segregated cities like Montgomery faced unequal treatment and access to public buses, what Bullard (2004) has called “transportation racism.” Segregation laws denied the right of African American riders to sit in the first ten rows of bus seats and all seats on city buses could ultimately be given up to white patrons if needed. Yet, as Bullard (2004, 16) has pointed out, “Blacks were fighting for more than a seat on the front of the bus. They were demanding Black bus drivers, more stops in Black neighborhoods, and elimination of the practice of forcing Black riders to pay at the front of the bus but enter through the back.” Achieving fairness in the bus system was especially important to the dignity of African American working-class women in Montgomery. According to McGuire (2010), these women were sexually harassed and abused by bus drivers on a regular basis, prompting us to consider the fuller range of rights that segregated busing violated.

At the same time that transportation can be used for the purposes of disenfranchisement and degradation, it can also become a tool of social protest. Alongside the history of efforts to control black movement, there is a parallel history of African Americans exercising resistant forms of mobility, from the many attempts to escape slavery to the Great Migration out of the South in the twentieth century. Montgomery’s bus boycott was not an isolated moment but part of a larger history of transportation activism in the South (R. D. G. Kelley 1996). From 1900 to 1907, African Americans waged streetcar boycotts in twenty-five southern cities to resist the passage of early Jim Crow segregation laws (B. M. Kelley 2010). Indeed, it was a streetcar boycott in Montgomery in 1900 that led city fathers to pass a law that prohibited boycotting. Over fifty years later, King and other bus boycott leaders would be arrested and found guilty of violating this law. The decision did not curtail the Movement; just the opposite, it became a “new rally point for local bus boycotters” and brought national attention and support (Phibbs 2009, 53).

The Montgomery bus boycott was the setting for remapping, literally and figuratively, the politics of African American mobility on at least two levels. First and most obvious, by refusing to ride buses on a daily basis, boycotters carried out a bodily contestation of the racist ways in which African American mobility had been devalued and constrained in the past, sending a message to city leaders that white supremacy in transportation was being challenged. Seeing empty buses devoid of black passengers was also a strong symbol to many African Americans, contributing to their sense of solidarity and commitment to the boycott (Robinson 1987). Second, by constructing other forms of mobility in Montgomery, boycotters not only provided themselves alternative travel but also created sites of resistance in which they exercised self-determination and negotiated white hostility on a daily basis. The seemingly mundane act of traveling in alternative ways took on political value and symbolic meaning to African Americans not always fully captured in discussions of the Movement’s prominent leaders and dramatic events.

Montgomery’s Alternative Transportation System

Although the alternative transportation system created during the Montgomery bus boycott constituted a major achievement in social mobilization, we have only a few detailed descriptions of the system in the literature (Robinson 1987; Gilliam 1989; Willie 2008). Among these sources, Robinson’s (1987) memoir provides an especially valuable firsthand account of the everyday organizational efforts in Montgomery. Robinson, a professor at Alabama State University, served as a chief strategist for the Montgomery Improvement Association, negotiated with city and bus officials, and drove boycotters to and from work throughout the campaign. In addition, she edited the organization’s newsletter, which was a major source of information for boycott supporters inside and outside of Montgomery (McGuire 2010). Robinson also served as president of the Women’s Political Council, an early critic of segregated bus seating. A year and a half before the arrest of Rosa Parks on 1 December

1955, Robinson (1987, x) had written a letter to Montgomery Mayor W. A. Gayle on behalf of her organization, “insisting upon improved conditions for black riders of city buses and threatening a boycott if city and bus company officials did not offer significant improvements.” Robinson’s own humiliating experience with segregation on Montgomery’s buses (she was forced to vacate a reserved white-only seat) is detailed in her memoir, along with stories of white bus drivers verbally and physically abusing African Americans and weary black riders being ignored or passed by at bus stops.

Although there is not sufficient space to discuss it here, drawing from Robinson’s memoir is also helpful in directing our attention to the role that other women played in the bus boycott beyond Rosa Parks. It is worth pointing out that although the focus on Rosa Parks would appear to recognize the contributions of women, the prevailing image of Parks is one of her carrying out an act of personal frustration (by refusing to give up her seat) rather than tactical protest, which Robinson and Parks certainly did throughout the boycott. The absence of Robinson and other women from the conventional story of Montgomery resulted in part from media accounts at the time that framed the boycott largely around King’s leadership, but the story was also revised from within the larger Movement. Civil rights organizations, “in an effort to use Montgomery’s success to spark similar civil rights campaigns throughout the South, recast the bus protest as a movement led by ministers” (McGuire 2010, 107). Soon after the boycott, the Fellowship of Reconciliation, an interfaith peace organization, published a comic book further institutionalizing the view that King and “his cavalry of militant ministers came to the rescue of Rosa Parks” (McGuire 2010, 107). One scene from the comic shows King using a mimeograph machine to run off copies of an announcement calling for the one-day bus boycott that eventually led to the much longer refusal to ride. In reality, it was Robinson who was responsible for producing the thousands of leaflets that first implored African Americans to stay off Montgomery buses immediately after Parks’s arrest. The influence of that comic book cannot be underestimated: it was translated into Arabic and is credited with inspiring some Egyptians involved in the 2011 revolution (Cavna 2011).

According to Robinson, the issue of transportation was a major priority to boycott organizers early on and the Montgomery Improvement Association established an entire committee to take up the task of planning alternative travel for African Americans. A number of different modes of travel were developed and utilized over the thirteen-month boycott, particularly in response to tightening white control and intimidation, both from city officials and the White Citizen Council. For example, during the first days of the boycott, black-run taxis played an important role in transporting boycotters, along with private carpools and, of course, walking. On weekdays, cab drivers charged riders only a dime and the Montgomery Improvement Association covered the difference in fare. This practice, however, violated an existing city ordinance that set a minimum fare of forty-five cents per taxi ride and Montgomery city officials were quick to alert cab companies of this fact and target African American taxis for additional scrutiny and surveillance.

The loss of inexpensive taxi rides as an alternative mode of travel for boycotters pushed the Montgomery Improvement Association Transportation Committee to develop an intricate, free carpool system. As Robinson (1987) noted, members of the Transportation Committee mapped out the routes for the carpool system and devised a spatial network of pickup and dispatch stations. Each day, approximately 325 private cars operated by volunteer drivers picked up passengers from forty-three dispatch stations and forty-two pickup stations. From 5 a.m. to 10 a.m., boycotters were picked up near their neighborhoods at dispatch stations, with dozens of cars leaving every ten minutes to transport people to areas where they worked or to a central exchange station where they could transfer to another car. From 1 p.m. to 8 p.m., workers would be transported from pickup stations near their jobs and returned to the dispatch station where they began their day. Carpool schedules were posted in public places and it is estimated that the system transported in excess of 1,000 people a day and a total of approximately 200,000 riders during the entire boycott (Gilliam 1989).

Although the carpool system did not accommodate the travel demands of all boycotters, it was the most visible and controversial element

of the alternative transportation network used in Montgomery. African Americans took great pride in the carpool, donating money at mass meetings to support it, and some even bragged that it got them closer to their houses than the city bus (Robinson 1987). Indeed, a common complaint was that city buses stopped at each block in white neighborhoods while only stopping at two-block increments in black neighborhoods. The carpool system was mapped and planned in a way to take advantage of local black entrepreneurs, institutions, and resources. Dispatch stations were located in African American residential areas and thirty-seven of these stations were located in front of black churches that would provide shelter to riders in the morning. Other dispatch stations included funeral homes, service stations, clubs, and other businesses owned by African Americans. Morris's (1984) research advocated the value of an "indigenous" approach to studying the Civil Rights Movement focused on the role of local resources in mobilizing protest. "A central concern of the indigenous perspective is to examine the ways in which organizers transform[ed] indigenous resources into power resources and marshal[ed] them in conflict situations to accomplish political ends" (Morris 1984, xii). As dispatch stations, African American institutions and places of business became important sites of indigenous, everyday activism in Montgomery, serving an important political end by facilitating the mobility of boycotters.

The pickup stations, located near places where African Americans worked, were sited in white areas of Montgomery, with most of them at major street intersections. Other pickup stations included stores, businesses, white churches, schools, and even the parking lot of a prominent country club (Gilliam 1989). According to Robinson, the success of the carpool system rested on the establishment and use of two downtown pickup stations as central exchange points for boycotters. These two stations, both on African American-owned land, consisted of a parking lot on McDonough Street and Dean's Drugstore on Monroe Street. As she pointed out, "Because the sites were private property, authorities did not have authority to molest passengers or to question them there" (Robinson 1987, 93). Throughout the boycott, the Montgomery police force was used to intimidate and disrupt the carpool system,

from closely monitoring dispatch and pickup stations to pulling over and often fining carpool drivers on flimsy traffic violations. King was arrested and put in jail for allegedly driving thirty miles per hour in a twenty-five-mile-per-hour zone, joining hundreds of other carpool drivers who were harassed during the boycott (Robinson 1987). An everyday activism permeated these experiences as drivers and riders endured daily harassment and responded nonviolently.

The carpool system was supplemented later by the purchase of a dozen station wagons, each registered in the name of a different African American church. Some of the money used to purchase and fuel the station wagons came from a group of African American women led by Georgia Gilmore, a cafeteria worker fired for her organizing efforts. The women sold baked goods at beauty salons and on street corners to raise funds and feed boycotters (Milner 1989). The original plan behind the station wagons had been for African Americans to organize their own Montgomery Transit Company, but city commissioners denied the proposal. Although the group was never formally incorporated, the Montgomery Improvement Association decided to use the station wagons anyway and staff them with paid, full-time drivers. Supporters outside of Alabama donated four other station wagons. Together, these wagons were known as "rolling churches" because of the singing of hymns that often emanated from them, illustrating the emotionally charged nature of the alternative transportation experience. Ultimately, the Montgomery City Commission, which filed a lawsuit claiming that it represented an unlicensed "private enterprise," would challenge the carpool system. On 13 November 1956, a circuit judge issued a temporary stoppage of the carpool. That same day the U.S. Supreme Court delivered a verdict that struck down segregation on Montgomery's buses. Because the Supreme Court decision did not reach local officials until 21 December, African Americans spent over a month without their carpool. In response, boycotters walked or participated in private pools or ride sharing.

The importance of walking as an alternative to riding the bus was not limited to the final month of the bus boycott. Boycotters frequently walked many miles a day to get around Montgomery. Walking, perhaps more than any other resistant mobility, was susceptible to

white retaliation. Angered by the resilience of the boycott, members of the Ku Klux Klan took shifts walking down Montgomery downtown streets to intimidate African Americans (Phibbs 2009). Robinson (1987) recounted the city's "get tough" policy and the hate campaign carried out against African American walkers from whites in passing cars. Rotten eggs, potatoes, apples, and even bricks were thrown at boycotters on the road. White youth with Confederate flags would ride through black neighborhoods hurling balloons filled with urine at pedestrians. These experiences, although demoralizing expressions of racism, increased the resolve of many African Americans to stay off city buses. The everyday act of walking took on great emotional meaning and was viewed by many African Americans as an act of protest rather than simply a form of peripatetic travel.

Not all whites in Montgomery opposed the bus boycott and the insurgent transportation system created by African Americans. Reverend Robert Graetz, the white pastor of a black Lutheran parish, assisted the Transportation Committee of the Montgomery Improvement Association and used his own car to drive members of his congregation to work. More important, some white women in Montgomery supported the boycott by transporting their African American maids to and from work or giving them money for private taxis—reflecting not only a selfish desire to have their wash, cooking, and child care done but also the close personal ties between white and black women in the city (Phibbs 2009). Traditional historical accounts have tended to emphasize how some whites "gave" boycotters rides, a rather passive portrayal of African Americans. Depictions of white altruism and selfishness are more accurately understood in relation to the leverage maids exerted in the workplace and how they actively constructed opportunities to "gain" rides during the boycott, illustrating the role of everyday, female-created mobility in supporting the boycott.

Moving Students and Historical Subjects

The goal of our spatially reoriented account of the boycott is to cultivate among students a sense of the struggle's meaning for its par-

ticipants and thereby inspire a richer understanding of the Movement's significance more generally. One result of the spatially sophisticated retelling of the boycott has been to broaden its context, moving its history away from two unhelpful tendencies. The first is what might be called the "Hey, presto!" version of describing the Movement that ignores the decades of organizing that went on in communities. The second tendency creates an overriding air of inevitability about the Movement, as if it followed a natural course of social change and national progress after World War II, thus devaluing the everyday sacrifices of men and women. As a result, the dynamism of the Movement is lost along with the humanity of those involved. As we teach about the Montgomery bus boycott in ways intended to recapture its dynamism, it is important to encourage students to reflect on the work undertaken by the Movement's activists—the physical, intellectual, and emotional labor of trying to achieve social change rather than its outcomes alone. This article's focus on mobility is offered as a small step toward dislodging the Movement from the grasp of bland, dehumanizing historical truths.

Toward this end, one of us (Alderman) engages his students in a role-playing exercise in the service of empathetic pedagogy. Working within the framework of participant simulation and cognitive dissonance, he asks students to organize a bus boycott. Small groups of students work together to design a carpool plan that allows each person to be dropped off and picked up in enough time for work, school, shopping, and other essential daily activities. Each small group then joins with the class as a whole to devise a single carpool plan. Given that many of his students do not regularly ride a bus (even though one is available) and often drive to campus alone, designing a common carpool schedule causes significant frustration among the students as they map out the routes that must be followed for pickup and return trips. In fact, some groups try to give up, complaining that it is impossible to devise such a system that accommodates everyone. A discussion ensues regarding the amount of organizational intelligence and collective and individual sacrifice that went into carrying out the boycott campaign in Montgomery. By struggling with this exercise, students realize and empathize with

the kind of resiliency and creativity that it took to construct an alternative mobility network.

The point of this exercise is to crack the shell of complacent rehearsals of the Movement in the service of developing the kind of empathy that allows our students—and us, for that matter—to grasp the potential for new sociospatial relationships and arrangements. Specifically, Alderman's debriefing of the lesson methodically progresses from the past to present-day issues of African American mobility, identity, and subjectivity. Indeed, the fight for greater racial equality in public transportation continues to be an issue in Montgomery, where whites ride buses in far fewer numbers than in 1955. "By the fortieth anniversary of the bus boycott, service had been cut by 70 percent and fares doubled. . . . Student and old-age discounts were eliminated. In 1996 midday service stopped" (Wypijewski 2000, 18). The overt racism of 1950s Montgomery has been replaced by a more insidious yet no less dangerous version of white privilege wrapped in the language of investment, a rationalized discrimination in which businesses, governments, and individuals use the pursuit of profit or cost saving as justification for disinvesting in black people and places (B. Wilson 2000). Despite the positive outcome of the Montgomery bus boycott, race and class barriers in public transportation are still evident in many American cities (Bullard and Johnson 1997). Present-day public reaction to these inequalities could be best described as apathetic rather than empathetic, making these engagements with students even more imperative.

An empathetic pedagogy, although concerned with encouraging students to identify with the struggles of others, is also about exploring empathy as a historical force in the Movement and the larger social and spatial importance of subjectivity (Probyn 2003; Kingsbury 2007). In particular, it is important for students to explore the larger geography of public feeling and support that contributed to the boycott. Analyzing the formation of these feelings and attitudes can enliven our retelling of the Movement in the classroom while also shedding light on why the Montgomery campaign is retold in selective and limited ways.

The success of the boycott was not solely the product of local activism within Montgomery but also depended on mobilizing segments

of the wider American public—white, as well as African American. Social movements often assert the importance of their struggle across different scales to tap into new resources and influence a broader base of opinions (Williams 1999). The expensive project of running Montgomery's alternative transportation system was funded with the help of sizable donations from whites and African American across the country. Especially important were northern white organizations, such as labor groups, liberal churches and synagogues, and factions of the Democratic Party. National news coverage (e.g., *Time*, *Newsweek*, *Washington Post*) had the dual effect of educating the public about the struggle in Montgomery and "giving an emotional jolt to the spirit of the protesters" (Phibbs 2009, 52). The National Deliverance Day of Prayer, held in March 1956 to support the boycott, was observed in many U.S. cities.

How was it that the story of Montgomery's African Americans gripped people to side with the boycott? This is a particularly important question because boycott activists succeeded where earlier attempts had been violently suppressed as a threat to the established social order and ignored by the national public as a "peculiarity" of the South. We argue that a thorough understanding of the Movement must engage with the question of how discourses about civil rights and racial identity travel across and connect with different places and how these representations move people emotionally and politically—a more figurative but no less important way of understanding the politics of mobility. It is on the question of how discourses move and grip people that psychoanalysis provides valuable ideas. Especially helpful are two concepts translated from the writings of Lacan (1991)—the quilting point (*point de capiton*) and extimacy (*extimité*)

The idea of a quilting point, derived from the idea of an upholstery button, refers to how cultural meanings become anchored to words or images. The quilting point also refers to how a shared "master signifier" (e.g., capitalism, communism, feminism) serves as a central reference point around which we bind or stitch the ideological meanings of other related words or images (Žižek 1989). It is our contention that the political efficacy of the Civil Rights Movement resulted from how it was quilted through the shared master

signifier “American” and connected to popular discourses of democracy and freedom (Morris 1984). By quilting civil rights through American and “democracy,” Movement leaders were able to ideologically (re)define the associated elements of “citizen” (e.g., equitable access to formal state functions), “racial identity” (e.g., the United States as a pluralistic, multiracial state), and “opportunity” (e.g., access to means, if not outcomes, of political-economic power).

Generations of African American activists had previously laid claim to the discourse of American political ideals; Sojourner Truth, Fredrick Douglass, W. E. B. DuBois, and a host of nineteenth- and early twentieth-century militants had long called hot shame on white America’s failure to honor its democratic commitments. Until midcentury rolled around, however, this rhetorical tradition had not proven to be particularly effective at combatting racism. What changed is that Movement activists, King foremost among them, were able to organize and agitate around local and regional issues of white supremacy and black resistance in ways that linked it with the empathies of a broader national audience. Geographic movement was often behind this quilting process as Movement leaders, especially King, traveled across the country to speak about the Montgomery campaign, the need for national support, and the “American” nature of the boycott and its goals. Popular media outlets, as mentioned earlier, also played an important role in this mobile quilting.

The quilting of the Movement into the national imagination partially resulted from the dynamics of asserting America’s reputation in a Cold War context. In the context of the Cold War’s struggle for the hearts and minds of Asia, Africa, and South America, the dismissal of state-sanctioned, institutionalized violence came to be interpreted as at odds with both the time and place of post-World War II America (Arnesen 2009). The quilting point, “American,” effectively enabled the collective symbolization of racial trauma—lynching, rape, Jim Crow, paternalism, and race-baited politics—as adverse to national identity and making it no longer useful to compromise the civil claims of blacks to be Americans. In the midst of a global Cold War, interested parties sought to rescale the production of racial and regional identities. Just as the elite in the United States were

seeking to imagine their identity at a global level, grounded in the axiomatic “rightness” of liberal-democratic, free-market ideals for everyone, along comes a critique of that claim manifested as resistance to everyday, run-of-the-mill racism in the American South—in the process exposing the perversity of such expansively ideological claims. This critique was used to devastating effect by communist newspapers such as *The Daily Worker* and *Pravda*. Suddenly, elites across the United States were moved to interpret racism as an ideological threat, as un-American.

To enhance the conceptual utility of the quilting point, we add the concept of extimacy to further elucidate how empathy is mobilized and takes place geographically. For our purposes, extimacy—a neologism of the words *external* and *intimacy*—enables us to understand how emotions move between people, places, signifiers, and things. From a Lacanian perspective, extimacy supplements the basic notion that our subjectivity is not only decentered in terms of multiple and unstable identities but “ex-centric” (Lacan 1991, 9). Extimacy consists of two dynamic and interrelated qualities. On the one hand, our most intimate feelings and beliefs (e.g., love, jealousy, suspicions, etc.) can be extremely foreign or “other” to us, apparently lodged unknown within us, welling up and brimming over on occasion with little or no warning. We can, in effect, be strange to ourselves, unable to declare or acknowledge affinities and sympathies. On the other hand, our most intimate feelings and beliefs can be radically externalized, or transferred onto objects, symbols, and famous people without losing their intensity and integrity. The locus of subjectivity, then, is as much outside as it is inside; that is, as much in material social landscapes as it is in our embodied hearts and minds. With its emphasis on the externalization of emotion and concern, extimacy facilitated a national identification with and sympathy for the African American struggle in Montgomery.

Specifically, it is our contention that the status of racial segregation’s conventional inside–outside dichotomy was transformed—rendered extimate—by Movement activists. The idea of the threatening foreign “black other” and the desire to keep it spatially subordinate to whites was increasingly challenged by a Movement that went to great

pains to control how its participants were represented to the American public. This was no more apparent than in the Movement's strategic construction or, more accurately, the quilting of the meaning of Rosa Parks's image. Montgomery's black leaders and the black press represented Parks as a poised, devout Christian woman who was "mild-mannered" and a "lady who adhered to the best ideals of middle-class respectability" (K. H. Wilson 2005, 301). Played down were Parks's lengthy involvement with the NAACP and the protest training she received months before her famous arrest. This image facilitated expressions of extimacy with Parks, prompting observers to ask, "Who is this nice (perhaps even no-longer "merely" black) lady, someone who could be like me, even close to my heart? Why is she being arrested by these increasingly other, increasingly distant white thugs, who are increasingly becoming a threat to my inner feelings, as well as Rosa's?"

Journalistic accounts of Parks's arrest for violating bus segregation rules courted widespread empathetic interpretations. Parks's image dominated the country's newspapers throughout boycott, frequently eclipsing mentions of other bus protestors, even though her daily involvement in the boycott was very limited (Schwartz 2009). Given her image of "womanhood, decorum, and Christian virtue," Parks's arrest "made segregation seem not only foolish but uncivilized" and became a major ideological weapon for the boycott and the Movement (K. H. Wilson 2005, 313). The result was an extimate effect; that is, the blurring of formerly neat sociospatial boundaries between allied "insiders" and threatening "outsiders." Reworking the lines of insider and outsider was fundamental to the political and spatial logics of the Movement. In his *Letter from a Birmingham Jail*, in response to the white liberal fear of "outsiders, coming in" to disturb their political project of gradual reform of the established racial order, King (1991, 289–90) theorized resistance to racism in terms of extimacy: "Never again can we afford to live with the narrow, provincial 'outside agitator' idea. Anyone who lives inside the United States can never be considered an outsider anywhere within its bounds."

Parks achieved iconic status in part because her story addressed American (i.e., middle-class—both white and black) anxieties about

the propriety of social activism. It is important to recall that activism of this sort was widely seen as radical-inspired rabble rousing; calls for "gradualism" and patience enjoyed more support than is popular to admit today. In fact, there had been bus boycotts before Montgomery, most of which had ended in violence and the continuation of second-class citizenship. Likewise, other black women had challenged Montgomery's segregation ordinance; all of them, however, possessed qualities that rendered them vulnerable to slander and defamation. As a result, local activists hesitated to stake their claim on someone whose character could be questioned. Claudette Colvin's case was typical: strong-willed and eager to fight racism, she nevertheless had not graduated from high school and was a single mother. Parks's arrest struck a chord throughout black Montgomery and, in time, the rest of the United States: if someone of Parks's character could be assailed by segregation, who was safe? The nascent Movement appeared to have its extimate heroine, someone "out there" on television and in newspapers who stirred the innermost feelings of many black and white Americans. Thus, Parks's arrest—the arrest of a decent, hard-working, church-going lady—catalyzed an empathetic "chain reaction" among civil rights activists in Montgomery and in short order across the country.

It is no coincidence, then, that Parks's arrest set the boycott in motion: pictured on the everyday space of the bus, she is easy to empathize with. Yet there is nothing inevitable about the consequences of Parks's image. How different would the reception have been if the image consisted of Parks shouting or scowling? She would have likely been cast as the disreputable "outside" agitator. Even if the larger public had only an inkling of sympathy for Parks, they would certainly know that they did not want to be on the side of white thuggish authorities. Such figures embodied the worst of the worst in the Cold War context; they could easily be considered as dangerous or anti-American as outsiders from Moscow or Beijing.

Like the building of the alternative transportation system in Montgomery, the quilting of civil rights through the master signifier of "American," and the framing of Rosa Parks's image to invoke extimacy speak to the tactical savvy of the Movement. Although arguably

necessary at the time, these representational efforts to gain the empathy and support of white and black America have unfortunately contributed to the limited ways we publicly remember the Movement, perhaps explaining why some of our students find it so unsatisfying. Quilting the Movement to ideas of American national identity continues today as we look at many of the commemorative sites devoted to civil rights. As Inwood (2009a) pointed out when examining the King National Historic Site in Atlanta, Georgia, the Movement is often represented in deradicalized ways that support, rather than question, prevailing values about American democracy and the neoliberal socioeconomic order. More radical yet, important questions about economic injustice and militarism are pushed off the table because they are too endemic to the American political-economic system. Rosa Parks continues to serve as a highly popular point of extimacy for white and black Americans when they remember the boycott and the larger Movement. Parks's famous legacy demonstrates what Schwartz (2009) has called "the symbolic power of oneness," which captures how public recognition of a single individual or event can result in a collective forgetting of other equally important people and efforts. Sadly, casting the Movement in terms of the fight for black middle-class respectability and encouraging national empathy along these lines leaves little room for appreciating the class and gender tensions that drove the boycott. Pedagogically, this dominant framing is unhelpful because it is these very tensions—unresolved and largely unexamined—that have the power to provoke and animate student understanding of the protest today.

Concluding Remarks

The literature regarding geographic pedagogy in general shares a theoretical lacuna that Rose (2002, 459) has attributed to cultural geography in particular: there is a "fundamental problem in cultural geography . . . there is no account of how representation works." This article's focus on the concept of empathy—the ability to identify with the feelings of another person—addresses this gap in geography's pedagogical literature. Although Bondi (2003)

has asserted that attending to the embodied dynamics of empathy can enhance methods such as interviews in fieldwork, we believe that empathy can further the relevance of geography in the classroom. We advocate for a more enlivening way of teaching the historical geography of the Civil Rights Movement by drawing on empathetic role-playing exercises in class and offering a more bottom-up and gender-accurate account of the Montgomery bus boycott. The danger in not engaging students in the gendered and working-class roots of the Movement is not limited to historical inaccuracy but also the clear message such practices send regarding who matters (and who does not matter) within society, thus perpetuating unequal social perceptions and relations into the future.

We also suggest that there is a paucity of research on the importance of empathy in the Movement's historical geography and a need to understand how the public makes sense of civil rights past and present. The central task here is to help students assess why certain aspects of "old-fashioned" racial discrimination and oppression were shunted aside as others have remained and in some regards increased. We argue that a thorough understanding of the Movement must engage with the question of how discourses move and grip people—the figurative understanding of mobility alluded to earlier—that is, how identifications and practices are socialized in a spatially coherent and politically effective way. Recent work on the sociospatiality of subjectivity is important here and suggests that as educators we ask our students to attend to the complex motives that animate people.

We argue that the psychoanalytic concepts of the quilting point and extimacy can revivify our theoretical understandings of the subjective and empathetic dimensions of the Movement. The quilting point helps to explain how the Movement was able to persuasively incorporate a greater number, both black and white Americans, into its discourses for social change. Extimacy illustrates how the iconic image of Rosa Parks helped to inaugurate a shift in the emotional and spatial logics of U.S. segregation wherein the figure of a feared and foreign "black other" became less tenable. Although these efforts were no doubt important in moving some Americans to side with boycotters, they have had the consequence

of putting in place a mythic image of the Movement that students might recognize but not necessarily care about. How is it possible to enliven, through empathetic pedagogy, the stale classroom narratives associated with the Movement? To more fully engage with the ongoing struggle for social justice and equity, we suggest that geographers foreground an empathetic understanding of mobility. ■

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